

Tax rebates helping fund faith projects

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Budget cuts to Rod McLean's church youth group jeopardized a summer mission trip to Washington state.

As he wondered how he could help them meet their \$13,000 budget, he remembered the upcoming federal tax rebate. He decided to donate his stimulus check — and persuade others at Lake Edge United Church of Christ in Madison, Wis., to do the same.

"I thought, 'What a natural,'" said McLean, a 67-year-old retiree. "If a lot of people can give 10, 15, 20 percent of that, it's not like digging into their normal budgets."

He told church leaders of his idea and the "Share the Windfall Fund" was born. This weekend members of the church will present their checks at a potluck and help decide which missions, including soup kitchens and homeless shelters, they'll support.

The church of about 900 members in Wisconsin's capital city isn't alone. From United Church of Christ members, to Lutherans and Quakers, religious groups are asking people to donate at least part of their checks to their groups or other charities.

The federal government hopes to stimulate the economy with the \$110 billion it's returning to taxpayers this spring and summer. But many see the extra money as an opportunity for charity.

"It's an unbelievable amount of cash that people of faith or people of conscience could choose to say, 'You know, we could get along without this. We could put this money to use,'" said Ken Sehested, co-pastor at the Circle of Mercy church in Asheville, N.C.

His congregation of about 50 adults, which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ and Alliance of Baptists, voted to give at least 10 percent of their checks to charities.

Sehested said many parishioners are still waiting for their rebate, so he's not sure how much they'll donate or where it'll go. He and his wife plan to give their entire \$1,200 check to their church's partner congregation in Cuba.

The "Tax Rebate for Peace" ef-

fort by the Friends Committee on National Legislation, a Quaker lobby group, has received more than 30 such donations so far, averaging \$100 each, spokesman Jim Cason said. The group promotes peace and diplomacy, including boosting spending for the State Department and U.N.

Religious groups traditionally receive the most donations in the United States.

In 2006, the most recent year data is available, some \$295 billion was donated in the U.S., according to Giving USA Foundation, with research from the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy. Of that, nearly one-third went to religious groups. The nearly \$97 billion they received is more than double the next most-popular segment, education, which received nearly \$41 billion.

Sandra Enos, a sociologist at Bryant University in Smithfield, R.I., who specializes in nonprofits and philanthropy, said donations to food pantries and other local charities can benefit the economy just as much as spending on a new TV or vacation.

"Boy, if you're feeding local people who are hungry, it's like locally spurring the economy, so it's a wise economic choice, it seems," she said.

At McLean's church, if all members give 10 percent of their rebates, the congregation could raise \$40,000, said senior pastor Paul Shupe. The congregation's charities include mission work for the homeless and hungry, and the youth group's trip to the Pacific Northwest later this month.

"We're using it as a teaching moment for us, an opportunity to think about our wealth and our resources and our responsibility," Shupe said.

While charity is important, church leaders must also make sure that members who need the

money know it's OK to keep it, said Bishop Paul Stumme-Diers of the Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He recently urged ELCA leaders at a national conference to ask congregants to donate — but only if people can afford to do so.

"This is not to lay a guilt trip on people, but rather it's an invitation for those who are really able to give beyond the usual amounts because of this unexpected windfall," he said.

His family of four — with one child under 17 — expects to get \$1,500 back and all of it will go to charity. The family will decide together how it will be divided.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs, an umbrella group for the nation's 125 Jewish community relations councils and national agencies, is grappling with similar concerns.

The council doesn't want to issue a mandate on donating, especially if people are in need, but hopes that those who are financially able will consider giving, said Rabbi Steve Gutow, the council's executive director.

McLean is still waiting for the \$1,200 he and his wife are expect-

Religion briefs

FRIENDSWOOD, Texas (AP) — Parents of some junior high students are upset they weren't notified about a school presentation on Islamic culture, an omission that violated school district policy.

The parents' letter-writing campaign stems from a May 22 presentation at Friendswood Junior High, where two Muslim women gave a 30-minute presentation about Islamic life as part of a yearlong study of respect, tolerance and culture. The school is on Texas' Gulf Coast between Houston and Galveston.

The guest speakers discussed Muslim culture, including topics such as beliefs, food, dress, and famous Muslims.

School district spokeswoman Karolyn Gephart said principal Robin Lowe had the "best intentions," but Gephart acknowledged not informing parents beforehand was a mistake.

District policy states parents are to be informed about the purpose and content of presentations so that they can keep their children out if they think the material might be offensive or inappropriate.

Still, Gephart said, "If you pulled a book about Islam from the library, you would find the same stuff in the book. There was no proselytizing."

Kim Leago, whose son is in the eighth grade, said she's still upset

he was exposed to the "inappropriate" presentation. "We can't say, 'One nation under God' in school, so I definitely don't think (the presentation) was the right choice," she said.

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — In a sign of the changing face of American Catholicism, a 41-year-old of Mexican descent who grew up in Houston has been ordained the nation's youngest Roman Catholic bishop.

More than 1,000 people inside St. Mark's the Evangelist Catholic Church applauded the promotion of the Rev. Oscar Cantu as an auxiliary bishop of San Antonio, the equivalent of an assistant.

"This is our holy calling, my brother," Archbishop Jose Gomez said during his homily. "Are we worthy of it? Hardly. How could anyone be? And yet still he calls us."

Cantu grew up at Holy Name Church in Houston, where he returned as pastor to help run the school he once attended. He speaks four languages and taught at a Houston-area Catholic university.

Like the U.S. church as a whole, the 700,000-member San Antonio Archdiocese has been growing thanks largely to an influx of Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants. The shifting demographics make Hispanic candidates for bishop much

sought-after. Before his ordination, Cantu described himself as "a moderate conservative" — moderate on social issues, conservative on doctrinal issues.

"Above all, I call myself Catholic," he said. "I believe what the Catholic Church teaches."

http://www.archdiosao.org

YUMA, Ariz. (AP) — The city of Yuma is being sued by a church that was denied a permit to turn an old J.C. Penney Co. department store building downtown into a worship center.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court by the Alliance Defense Fund and the Center for Arizona Policy, acting on behalf of the Centro Familiar Cristiano Buenos Nuevas Christian Church.

The suit accuses the city of discrimination by enforcing a zoning code they say allows membership groups and theaters to locate in city's historic district while excluding religious organizations.

"Churches should not be singled out for discrimination by a city's zoning restrictions," said Byron Babione, senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund. "Prohibiting a church from occupying its own building simply because a city favors nonreligious assemblies over religious assemblies is not allowed under the Constitution or federal law."

SHARE the FAITH

Worship in the church of your choice this weekend.



MINGO BIBLE CHURCH, 420 Main Mingo, 785-462-2992: An independent community church served by Village Missions Intern Pastor Pat Colley. Sunday School: 9:30AM - all ages. Sunday Services: 10:45AM. Sunday Nights: 1st Sunday of the month: potluck following morning service - no evening service; 2nd Sunday: services at 6:30 PM; 3rd Sunday: informal fellowship - bring a snack to share!; 4th and 5th Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.

Schedule of church services

COLBY INDEPENDENT BAPTIST CHURCH, 730 E. 3rd (former Jaycee's building), Pastor Bernard Heinz, 460-0313, Sunday School 9:30 a.m.; Sunday Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.; Sunday Evening 6:00 p.m.; Wednesday Evening 7:00 p.m.

ASCENSION-ON-THE-PRAIRIE EPISCOPAL, Rev. Don Martin, College Drive & Wheatridge Rd., 462-3041, Holy Eucharist, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday. Evening Prayer, 5:15 p.m. Wednesday, September through May. Christian Education for Youth, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September through May

COLLEGE DRIVE ASSEMBLY OF GOD, Pastor, Jeremy Gundling, 245 W. College Dr. - 462-8234, Early Service - 8:00 a.m.; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Morning Worship - 10:45 a.m.

BEREAN CHURCH, 1000 S. Franklin, 460-2763, www.colbyborean.com; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m. Awana Clubs, Wednesday, 7 p.m., Middle & High School, Wednesday, 7 p.m. @ the Heartland Christian School Gym

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, (Affiliated with American Baptist Churches USA) Carroll H. Morony, Pastor, 615 W. Webster, 462-2867. Sunday School: 9:15 a.m.; Family Worship: 10:30 a.m.

COLLEGE VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, Pastor Tom Huffman, 1185 Wheatridge Rd. at College Drive, 460-7144, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship services, 10:45 a.m.

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC, 462-2179, Father Dana Clark, Pastor, Saturday Eve. Mass 5:30 p.m., Sunday Masses 8:00 & 10:00 a.m., Confessions will be heard Saturday 4:30-5:05 p.m. and from 7:30-7:45 a.m. and 9:25-9:40 a.m. on Sunday.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Rev. Carol Rahn, 515 W. 4th, 462-6342, Worship, 9:00 a.m.; Adult Sunday school, following worship.; Sept. thru May: Kid's Club for kids age 3-5th grade meets first Wednesday of the month from 5:15-6:45 p.m.; Youth Group for 6th-9th grade meets the first Wednesday of the month 6:30-8:00 p.m., and the second Wednesday 7:00-8:00 p.m.

WESLEYAN CHURCH, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, 1145 S. Franklin - 460-6605, President Gary Slavens, 460-2656; Jordan Barrett, 1st counselor, 460-1101; Tim Wilson, 2nd counselor, 785-846-7796. Sacrament meeting 10 a.m., Sunday School and Primary 11:20 a.m., Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, 12:10 p.m.; Family History Center open to public, 7-9 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment. Call 462-3571.

COLBY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. James Mardock, pastor, 950 S. Franklin, 460-6521, Sunday Worship Services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., Fellowship coffee 9:30 a.m., Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., KXXX broadcasts 11:00 worship. www.colbyumc.org

REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC., 345 N. Franklin, Dr. W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10a.m., Sunday worship, 11a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Centers (Bible School), 5 p.m. Shop online at: www.rlmregionalchurch.com

CHURCH OF CHRIST, 510 E. 4th, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, (Disciples of Christ), Pastor Pat Stuart and Pastor Lyle Knebel, 385 W. 3rd - 460-2718, Sunday Morning Worship at 10:00 a.m.; Sunday School at 11:15 a.m. E-mail: fccolby@st-tel.net

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Rev. John L. Schmidt, East 5th & Country Club, 462-3497, Services, Sat., 5:30 p.m., Sunday; Sunday School and Adult Bible Class 9:15 a.m.; Services, 10:30 a.m. Visit us at www.trinitycolby.com

OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH, Brewster, Sunday worship 9:00 a.m.; 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m.

PLEASANT HOME CHURCH, Pastor, Charlie Busch, 694-2242, 3190 Road 70, Edson, Worship, 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Evening service, 6:00 p.m.

LEVANT COMMUNITY CHURCH, 205 1st St., Pastor Jerry Vincent, 586-2376, Sunday School (classes for 3 years & up and 3 adult classes) 9:30 a.m., Morning worship 10:30 a.m.

WINONA METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. Sheryl Johnson, Sunday School, 10:30 a.m., Morning Worship 9:15 a.m. (CDT)

BREWSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, PO Box 250, Brewster. Pastor Dorine Chambers, 785-462-6044, Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.; Worship Service, 10:45 a.m.

THE SHEPHERD'S STAFF, REXFORD, Joan Dingwerth, Director, 687-2565

REXFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH, Rexford, Pastor Lane Purcell, 687-3305, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

BREWSTER COMMUNITY CHURCH, Mike Pinkelman, Pastor, Brewster - 694-2720, Sunday School (all ages) 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Wed. mornings 6:30 a.m. - Men's Bible Study, Wed. 7:00 p.m. - Children's Ministries (Royal Rangers/Missionettes), Wed. 7:15 p.m. - Intercosy & Prayer, Thurs. 4:00 p.m. - Women's Bible Study

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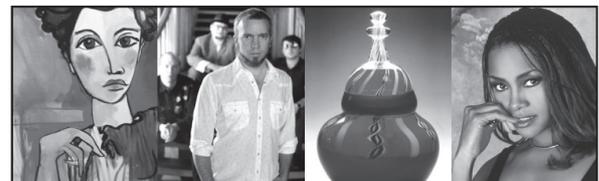
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